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SECURITY INFORMATION

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Memorandum for [REDACTED]

Subject: Summary Evaluation of the Net Capability of the USSR, as of Mid-1952, to Injure the Continental US

1. With apologies for coming in so late in the day, I nonetheless am troubled enough by the wording of this paper to offer these comments for what they are worth.

2. Page 2, paragraphs 3 c) - 3 f): These paragraphs have to be read with great care to separate the various points, and even after such careful reading one is still left a little confused. The basic problem seems to be clarifying what are apparently postulates of target selection. Thus c) would be "if targets are selected with the sole objective of neutralizing the ability. . . ." d) would become "if targets are selected to neutralize US atomic counter attack . . . ." e) and f) are "if targets are selected with the objective of inflicting maximum damage on over-all US armament production and military power . . . ." Then all four paragraphs would come under a single basic paragraph reading perhaps as follows:

"c) The nature of the damage that could be inflicted by Soviet surprise atomic air attack would vary according to the objectives governing the selection of targets."

Then, the present c), d), and a combined e) - f) would act as subparagraphs to the basic conclusion. Surely this would make your conclusions schematically much clearer.

3. Page 2, paragraphs 3 c) - 3 f): Subsidiary to the above general criticism are the following:

(a) Subparagraph 3 c) refers to the "probable Soviet stockpile", while e) gives the 100 figure as a possibility and f) says the actual figure is "probably appreciably less". These three different references are bound to confuse the reader not familiar with the existing estimate. Would it not be better to set forth the precise estimate as a preliminary statement of the discussion of the nature of the damage?

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(b) In subparagraph 3 c) the referent of "substantial achievement of these ends" is unclear, and it is possible for the reader to think that the words refer to US abilities. Why not replace these words by "such neutralization"?

(c) In the same subparagraph 3 c), the quick reader fails to see at once the connection between the stated purpose and a high delivery capability. If all four subparagraphs are not pegged to target selection, how about adding before "delivery capabilities" the following: "the probable targets selected would be such that".

4. Page 4, paragraph 5: This paragraph could be read to mean that the mere launching of attacks "to prevent . . . and to neutralize . . ." would accomplish objective 4 d). Surely the most that is meant is that if the attacks were sufficient to achieve these objectives, objective 4 d), in the Kremlin's judgment, would be likely to follow. But, if this is indeed what is meant, there is a serious confusion and ambiguity in the light of later statements that attacks could not "prevent retaliatory action" although they might "reduce the ability of the US to sustain large military operations". Must both objectives be successfully attained before 4 d) is achieved? And, incidentally, is the last sentence intended to apply to the consequences of an attack directed generally against US armament production and military power ( a target selection basis apparently distinguished from those named in the first sentence of paragraph 5, in paragraphs 3 c) - 3 f), and in the later paragraphs 6 b) (1) - 6 b) (3)). As paragraph 5 stands, I must say I find it wholly confusing and also at cross purposes with paragraph 6 b) (4) on page 7.

5. Page 7, paragraph 6 b) (3): This is substantially the same as subparagraph 3 c), and the comments in paragraph 3 above would apply.

6. One final substantive point. The only reference to the introduction of atom bombs in merchant ships appears to be in paragraph 9 c), dealing with sabotage. Without quibbling as to whether such introduction really properly belongs under this heading, I am startled at the conclusion that counter measures are probably adequate. Has there been a considered rejection or change in the statement made in paragraph 48 of SE-14, that "the USSR must be considered capable of utilizing a merchant ship for delivering an atomic weapon into a key US harbor with a relatively good chance of escaping detection"?

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